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House of Representatives

HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS OF PROJECT 112/PROJECT SHAD ACT

HON. BOB FILNER
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MR. FILNER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, you would think that we would have learned from the experience in Vietnam and Agent Orange, which the gentleman from Illinois (Marine Corporal EVANS) taught us as he led the charge to uncover what happened with Agent Orange and to give our servicemen and women some protection later on.

If we learned anything, it is that our veterans must be informed of the risks of exposure that they experience on the battlefield. We did not learn that in Persian Gulf War I, and we are left with the Persian Gulf War illness. I do not think we have learned it with Persian Gulf War II, and who knows what we are going to have after this war.

Veterans must know about the agents to which they were exposed and whether these agents are likely to produce any health consequences, and they must be taken care of if they become ill due to the

exposures during their service. That is what this bill does, based on this project that took place in the 1960s.

We have thanked a lot of people in the Congress for bringing this bill up, but I have to thank our veterans for their own diligence in bringing this matter to our attention. Once again, it was veterans who became ill who had to advocate on their own behalf to get their government, to get our government, to release information about harmful exposures so they could understand their own health issues and assert the legitimacy of their claims.

One of these veterans is Jack B. Anderson, a retired Navy man and a constituent of the gentleman from California (Mr. Thompson), and that is what brought the gentleman from California (Mr. Thompson) into this, and we thank him for his leadership, and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Rodriguez) also for bringing this bill to us.

(over)

This project, Project 112, was a \$4 billion testing effort. It would translate into a \$40 billion effort today. That is a massive undertaking. And there were tests at sea called Project SHAD to identify vulnerabilities to various types of attacks. Now, that is a legitimate function of our Defense Department, but they did not inform those who were tested that they were even participating in the test or that they have the right equipment to protect themselves or that their exposure might lead to later problems, this exposure to nerve gas and sarin.

Once again, it took veterans and it took Members of Congress to force the

Department of Defense to admit that they were at fault and to make sure that the veterans received health care and proper compensation.

So I thank all those who took part in this to finally bring some justice to this case. This Project 112 and Project SHAD, the Vietnam situation with agent orange, the Persian Gulf War illness, all of these are part of a pattern. One would think that we would learn that by now. I do not think that we have learned yet, however, our lesson, and we are going to see it again after this war in Iraq.

So, ladies and gentlemen, I urge support for H.R. 2433.